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ABSTRACT

One of a series of quinmester programs, this course is designed to introduce the student to significant literature that illustrates the gulf between the vision of a perfect society and the realities of human nature. Course content consists of the characteristics of a Utopian society, a definition of Utopia, attitudes toward Utopia, the relation of Utopia to society, and the student's evaluation of Utopia. Teaching strategies include individual project work, writing assignments, lectures, and the use of resource personnel. Through the study of Utopian societies students will gain skills in reading, writing, speaking, character study and evaluation. A resource list for students and teachers includes textbooks, paperback books, and films. (RS)

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AUTHORIZED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE QUINMESTER PROGRAM

DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

QUEST FOR UTOPIA

5114.71
5115.71
5116.71

Literature

CS200083

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION • 1971

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Literature

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for the
DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION
Dade County Public Schools
Miami, Florida
1971

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Miami, Florida 33132

Published by the Dade County School Board

Course Number	COURSE TITLE: QUEST FOR UTOPIA
5114.71 5115.71 5116.71	COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is designed to introduce the student to significant literature that illustrates the gulf between the vision of a perfect society and the realities of human nature. Selected works might include BRAVE NEW WORLD by Huxley, NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND by Dostoevsky, PINCHER MARTIN by Golding.

I. PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

A. The student will read selected materials to investigate the characteristics of a Utopian society.

B. The student will compare the different attitudes toward Utopia by selected characters.

C. The student will distinguish between the vision of the perfect society and the ability of a given character to achieve that vision.

D. The student will specify limitations imposed upon the individual or the society attempting to achieve a Utopia.

E. The student will discuss critically the desirability of the Utopia presented in the selected readings.

F. The student will formulate his own Utopia by using the characteristics of a perfect society as they have been determined through selected readings, discussions and independent research.

II. COURSE CONTENT

A. Rationale

Man has always strived to achieve perfection, and, as an individual, he is responsible to himself in seeking his own justification for existence. His plans, dreams, hopes and ambitions are all factors which determine success or failure in this, his quest for Utopia. The conflict arises, however, in the determiner of this acceptable or desired standard of living. Do the values which society sets upon the individual supersede those placed on the individual by himself? If this be the case, is man justified in overriding the imposed values in favor of those intrinsic to himself? Is it even feasible for man to attain a Utopia under this existing dichotomy?

This course will attempt to present man in his search for Utopia in proper perspective to man and his place in society. By studying related works, the student will be able not only to evaluate existing values, but will be able to accept or reject those values in his own quest for Utopia.

B. Range of subject matter

1. Characteristics of a Utopian society (previous to readings)
   a. As seen by the individual
   b. As seen by the society
2. Utopia —a definition (formulated from discussions and readings)
   a. Character's own definition of Utopia
   b. Similarity or difference between student definition and character definition

3. Utopia — attitudes towards

   a. Compare or contrast attitudes of characters appearing in the same work of literature. Are they assets or hindrances to each other?

   b. Compare or contrast attitudes of characters from several selected readings. Which characters are realistic and which are visionary?

4. Utopia — relation to society

   a. Difference between the vision of a perfect society and that which exists.

   b. Conflicts arising in or from society in the pursuit of perfection.

   c. Character's abilities to view himself not only as an individual but also as a member of society.

5. Utopia — limitations on

   a. Imposed by the individual himself

   b. Imposed by society

6. Utopia — student evaluation of

   a. Are the Utopias presented in the selected readings desirable?

   b. Are the characters' quests for Utopia in conjunction with the values of society?

   c. Are the Utopias of the characters real or visionary?

Note: In the concluding phase of THE QUEST FOR UTOPIA, the student, using characteristics he has synthesized from personal values, selected readings, group discussions and independent study, will formulate his perfect society.

III. TEACHING STRATEGIES

Most of the activities will initiate not from the teacher but from the students themselves. The teacher, taking a passive role, will act as a co-ordinator of discussions and his occasional lectures will be patterned back to the behavorial format of the course.

A. Project

This is to be given to the students at the beginning of the nine week period. Each group is to consist of two to four students.

At the end of the course, the student will formulate his own perfect society, his own Utopia. Throughout the course, he must weigh and evaluate the concepts presented to him through selected readings, films, tapes, resource personnel and independent study. The student will be solely responsible for his Utopia: its location, type of government, class structure, population, religion, or in essence, the entire society of which he wants to be a part. The method of presentation is left to the individual student, but should include written, oral and visual techniques.

B. Writing assignments

The students will critically evaluate both negatively and positively the Utopias presented by other students using the techniques of good expository writing. In their evaluation students will determine the probable success or failure of the Utopia.

Note: The following assignments will specifically relate to The Grapes of Wrath by Steinbeck but the type may be applied to other selected readings.

1. Compare hopes and ambitions of Ma and Pa Joad to those of Connie and the Rose of Sharon.

2. Jim Casey, who was once a preacher, changed from a man of thought to a man of action. How is this change related to his quest for perfection?

3. How is Tom's birth affected?

C. Short lectures

The teacher will give short lectures at his discretion, only to reinforce the behavorial objectives and to relate what's happening in today's society to the material presented in class.

D. Resource personnel

These will be representatives of groups pursuing their life's quest. The value of the resource figure will be in exposing the student to diverse approaches of goal achievement.

1. Member or leader of a commune

2. Leaders of religious sects

3. Prominent member of the Black Power Movement

IV. LEARNING ACTIVITIES

A. The student will read selected material to investigate the characteristics of a Utopian society.

1. Each student is to list three characteristics of a Utopia according to his own standards. After these are collected, the class will attempt to match the student to his Utopia. This will bring about not only a greater understanding between students but may also serve to determine the basic characteristics of a Utopia.

2. The students will view as many of the following films as possible:

a. Cool Hand Luke

b. Lord of the Flies

c. Mein Kampf

d. The Cardinal

A discussion of the characters in their personal quests for perfection may clarify or possibly change the characteristics of the Utopias that have been previously determined by the students.

3. After reading such poems as "Leaves of Grass," The Rubaiyát," "The Hollow Men," "The Wasteland," "On His Blindness," and "Journey of the Magi," the student will determine similarities found in each author's idea of Utopia.

4. After reading short stories such as "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," "Rain," "The Fiddler," and "By the Waters of Babylon," the student will create a visual representation of one of the Utopias presented. (This may also be done with the poetry.) This may be presented as a graph, chart, poster, painting, collage.

5. After reading such plays as No Exit, The Crucible, Hair, and The Glass Menagerie, the student will trace the main character in his search for perfection. How do the characteristics of his Utopia compare to those determined by the class?

B. The student will compare the different attitudes toward Utopia held by selected characters.

1. In Lord of the Flies, each boy has his own view of what the perfect society should be. Compare and contrast these views. How do their differences contribute to the ultimate destruction of the characters and the society they attempted to form?

2. Present orally a comparison between each boy in Lord of the Flies and a contemporary figure, living or dead, in relation to their goals and methods of achieving these goals.

3. Contrast the Utopias of Laura Winfield and her mother in The Glass Menagerie. How do these differences force Laura into a rejection of her own goals? How do these differences affect Tom and his father?

This discussion may be best accomplished in small groups.

4. After dividing into groups, the students will present scenes from The Glass Menagerie or other selected readings, which depict the characters in their conflicting attitudes.

5. Some students may prepare a panel discussion centering on Eliot's changing views of Utopia as seen in "The Hollow Men," "The Return of the Magi," and "The Wasteland."

C. The student will distinguish between the vision of the perfect society and the ability of a given character to achieve that vision.

Development of self-concept (This is included so that the student, in forming an accurate picture of himself, may view his goals in their proper perspective. This may also enable him to empathize with the characters in their conflicts, successes and goals.) The students will pair themselves.

a. Each student will list five strengths and weaknesses of his own personality.

b. Each student will list five strengths and five weaknesses evident in his partner.

c. The students will discuss how they see each other.

d. Considering their strengths and weaknesses, the students will determine how they help or hinder themselves in their own quests. In this way the students can determine the real or visionary nature of their own goals.

D. The student will specify limitations imposed upon the individual or the society attempting to achieve a Utopia.

1. In This Perfect Day, a "perfect" society has been created by Uni-Com. Discuss the reasons Chip desires to leave this society and return to society as we know it today. What restrictions are imposed on him in his attempt to flee?

2. There are limitations imposed on the individuals living in today's society. For example:

   a. Freedom to limit family size

   b. Freedom to b ar arms

   c. Freedom of expression

   Prepare a formal debate on the acceptance or rejection of these limitations. (Class instruction should be given on debate procedures.)

3. After dividing into three groups, the students will consider the question, "Are the limitations imposed on the individual today in effect in the 'perfect society' presented in This Perfect Day, 1984, or Fahrenheit 451?"

   Each group will consider a specific book.

4. The students will maintain a bulletin board of articles and pictures selected from daily newspapers and/or magazines which reflect the limitations imposed on individuals or groups attempting to seek either their own perfection or that of society. Possibly 15 minutes of each class period may be used to discuss these articles.

5. After listening to the sound track of a contemporary production such as Hair, the students will list those limitations imposed on society which are being attacked.

E. The student will discuss critically the desirability of the Utopia presented in the selected readings.

1. The student will read independently any two books of his choice which present a functioning "perfect" society. Choices might include Brave New World, Brave New World Revisited, 1984, This Perfect Day, Fahrenheit 451 and Walden II. After considering the following questions, the student will present his conclusions either by a formal oral presentation or an annotated term paper. (Instruction should be given on both forms.)

   The student will determine the one characteristic common to the Utopias presented in both books which is in direct contridiction to contemporary society. Discuss.

   What characteristics of our present society must be eliminated before the dehumanized Utopias presented in the selected readings can be achieved?

2. Some characteristics of the Utopias presented in selected readings could be beneficial to society in that they cure a present weakness. What are these weaknesses and how does their correction come about?

F. The student will formulate his own Utopia by using the characteristics of a perfect society as determined through selected readings, discussions and independent research.

   See III.A. (Project)

V. STUDENT RESOURCES

A. State-adopted textbooks

1. James, Thelma G., Northcott, Walter R., Shattuck, Marquis E., Kiley, Frederick S., ed. Literature of the World. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1963.

2. Carlsen, G. Robert, ed. The Themes and Writers Series. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1967.

3. Miller, Perry, ed. Major Writers of America. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1966.

4. Harrison, G. B., Major British Writers, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967.

Note: State adopted textbooks contain many examples of works centering around man's search for perfection, his successes and failures. The following sample list was taken from the sources listed above:

"Journey of the Magi"
"Dr. Heidegger's Experiment"
"El Dorado"
"The Rubaiyat"
"The Hollow Men"
"Richard Cory"
"The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"
"Leaves of Grass"
"The Wasteland"

B. Paperbacks

1. Bradbury, Ray. Fahrenheit 451. (rev. ed.)

2. De Saint-Exupery. The Little Prince.

3. Gibran, Kahlil. The Prophet. Knopf.

4. Golding, William. Lord of the Flies.

5. Golding, William. Pincher Martin. D 1182-Berk or 66-Cap.

6. Huxley, Aldous. Brave New World.

7. Levin, Ira. This Perfect Day.

8. Miller, Arthur. The Crucible.

9. More, Thomas. Utopia. Peter K. Marshall, tr.

10. Orwell, George. 1984.

11. Orwell, George. Animal Farm.

12. Sartre, J. P.. No Exit and Three Other Plays.

13. Steinbeck, John. The Grapes of Wrath.

14. Steinbeck, John. The Pearl.

15. Thoreau, H. D. Walden.

16. Williams, Tennessee. Six Great Modern Plays; The Glass Menagerie

VI. TEACHER RESOURCES

A. Books

1. Goodman, Paul. Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals.

2. Gray, Donald and Orrick, Allan, eds. Designs of Famous Utopias. (The Republic, Utopia, The New Atlantis, Looking Backward, Freeland, News From No Where, Walden II, a Modern Utopia.)

B. Films

1. Cool Hand Luke. Warner Brothers, 126 min.

2. Mein Kampf. Columbia Pictures, 121 min.

3. The Nun's Story. Warner Brothers, 151 min.

4. The Cardinal. Columbia Pictures, 175 min.

For further information on ordering films, write:
Mottas Films
1318 Ohio Avenue, N. E.
Canton, Ohio

C. Short films

1. "Hand, The." McGraw Hill. 19' color. 1-13819.

2. "Hitler, Adolph." Part I. 26' b&w. 1-31571

3. "Hitler, Adolph". Part II. 26' b&w. 1-31572.

4. "Stringbean, The." Cont. Films, Inc. 17' partly color.

5. "Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass." F. R. Line. 21' color. 1-12504.